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Break with Precedent

IN reconstituting the B.C. Power Commission with direct cabinet representation the provincial government is making a sharp break with precedent in the composition of that body. We question the wisdom of disturbing the independent status of a commission which was set up in 1946 for the development of public power operations in the province. With the exception of the PGE board, which operates as a group of directors with government representation, this principle has not been followed in B.C. with operating crown agencies in direct contact with the public as self-regulating bodies.

There has not yet been time for public reaction in response to the government's move. Direct cabinet participation in the affairs of the power board has implications apart from the general composition of the commission. The public may ask if this means that the administration is moving towards political domination of the publicly owned utility. The government might believe that it is moving in the contrary direction, towards a closer liaison with the work of the power commission and to strengthen its authority. Probably there can be no direct answer until the method has been tried.

State-owned bodies in the United Kingdom, the United States and elsewhere do not have cabinet representation on their boards; nor does the government of Canada on its Crown companies. However, there are some special conditions in British Columbia; moving now into what may be a considerable expansion of power development all round. The provincial government also has been under hot fire over its relationships with the BCPC, and may have designed the cabinet representation as assurance of its intentions, in reply.

Whatever the reasons for this step, the newly constituted body will take office on April 1. The choice of Dr. Hugh Keenleyside as chairman has been commended throughout the province. Two of the four commissioners to serve under him appear to be experienced utility men. Messrs. Kiernan and Williston hold senior portfolios in the cabinet, and in that sense are not a haphazard selection. The real test probably will come in how the administration itself will treat the new board: as a partner in trust to do a difficult job, or as a subordinate agency to carry out executive demands.

Subsidy Not the Answer

DISTURBING indications from the B.C. Electric Company that it may seek to escape its franchise payments to the Greater Victoria municipalities suggest that the time has come for a complete re-examination of the urban transit system.

That the company is losing money on its bus services has been established to the satisfaction of the Public Utilities Commission During the past many years those losses have been covered by drawing from revenues of the other branch of the BCE system, which deals in electricity. But for the fortuitous circumstance that the company has this second string to its bow the situation of the transit division both here and in Vancouver would be vastly different from what it is now. The two operations could scarcely be more dissimilar now that Victoria's public vehicles no longer run on electricity, but the commission continues to allow them to be treated as one. There is a good deal of hard feeling about that, since the effect is to keep light and power rates at a higher level than would otherwise be necessary. However, that is the judgment of the commission, and it must be accepted for the time being.

The rearrangement of finances which the company now appears to be seeking introduces an altogether different principle, and one which municipal leaders, quite properly, are disinclined to accept. The effect of cancellation of the franchise tax would be to compel the taxpayers of the region to subsidize the BCE. This franchise system has to be viewed not as a means whereby the municipalities make profit out of the buses, which they don't, but as compensation for the wear and tear of their roads.

If the transit operation were not required to pay towards the high cost of building roads to bus route requirements and maintaining them thereafter, the ratepayers would have to do so. Lifting the franchise tax therefore would be equivalent to granting the company a municipal subsidy—just a different way of doing it. The company is being subsidized now by the customers of its other branch; the councils have no control over that, but they have over municipal subsidies; and their first duty is to their taxpayers. None of the councils could afford to forego the franchise revenue without adding to a tax burden already causing alarm.

Since another increase in fares so soon after the last would encounter vehement opposition—and could put the operation deeper into the red—what is the solution? Those municipal leaders who have spoken on the subject this week appear to have the only visible one: more economical route plans and methods of operation. And that is up to the company.

Red China and Tibet

MR. HAROLD WINCH chose an anomalous moment to advocate recognition of Red China. While the CCF member was telling the House of Commons that China should be admitted to the UN the Tibetans were in revolt against the Communist masters who took them over by force nine years ago. Morality is not the guiding spirit at the UN, but the Tibetan situation does not help Mr. Winch's argument.

He is probably correct when he says Canada follows U.S. policy with respect to recognition of Red China. Some Commonwealth countries acknowledge the de facto position of the Peiping regime, and Canada has seemed to lean at times towards equal recognition for practical trade and diplomatic reasons. This country is stayed out of consideration for the American position, which has a valid viewpoint on the matter. Tibet suggests some second thoughts.

The picture is not clear, but it is apparent the Tibetans rose to prevent their revered Dalai Lama falling into Red Chinese hands. China has been moving towards unrestricted control of Tibet ever since it invaded that border country in 1950, and physical possession of the Lama would hasten their aims. The Tibetans cannot hope to match the military weight of the Chinese and doubtless their bid for freedom will be savagely repressed. In a sense it is Hungary over again.

India is watching the situation with some apprehension. After Tibet might come Nepal, over which India exercises some protection. Already India has suffered from encroachment of its vaguely defined borders with Red China. Were Nepal to follow Tibet and become a victim of Communist aggression, India would be directly vulnerable to infiltration and the insidious operations common to neighbors of either Russia or Red China. Mr. Nehru has looked indulgently in the past at Communist China, but he has reason now for some alarm.

Advocates of the early admission of Red China to the UN and de facto recognition of the Peiping regime were gaining ground, but opposing opinion will be hardened by the events now running riot in Tibet.

Tibetans in Revolt

By JOSEPH MacSWEEN
Canadian Press Staff Writer

THE Communist Chinese have received a new lesson in what the people of Tibet mean when they say their younger leader, the Dalai Lama, is "holder of the thunderbolt."

Reports from the remote Himalayan theocracy say the Tibetans, despite impossible odds, rebelled when word spread that the Communists were going to abduct the Dalai Lama, 23, whose power derives from thousands of years of religious and political history.

This was the latest in a series of struggles the Communists have faced since they moved into the small country in 1950.

The shy, studious Dalai Lama—"Buddha incarnate"—fled to the Tibet-India border at that time and stayed there for eight months while trying to negotiate a measure of autonomy with the conquerors. Finally, assured he would retain his status and powers, he returned to Lhasa late in 1951 and was greeted joyously.

Reports favorable to the Reds have been attributed to the Dalai Lama from time to time, but it is no secret that he has been quietly opposed to the new regime. In effect, he has been a prisoner all along.

Norris in the Vancouver Sun . . .

"You've got a record player and I've got a newspaper . . . Why don't we start a radio station?"

Thinking Aloud

". . . of shoes—and ships—and sealing wax—of cabbages and kings."

By TOM TAYLOR

PRESUMING one has neither ulcer nor palpitation it is easy to make fun of tensions and neurosis and all the high-pressure imponderables that nowadays smite men low, but it is no laughing matter.

Never perhaps was an age less sure of itself than the present one, which paradoxically has performed such wonders it should be overflowing with confidence.

On all sides you hear talk of the greater strain and faster pace of modern living as compared with former eras. That each of us could slow down and take things easier if we really wanted to does not lessen the complaint. We are so caught up in the swim, or imagine ourselves to be so caught up, we are absorbed automatically into the neurotic brigade.

* * *

Everyone of us, or so I gather, has unresolved neurotic forces stemming from our childhood; the way we eat, our approach to politics, economics or whatnot, our range of humor good or bad, our morals, our—everything.

This is the psychiatric point of view which this writer, knowing nothing technical about the subject, would not dispute except perhaps to wonder why this age should suffer especially from emotional tensions since our forefathers must have been possessed of the same kind of inward compulsions.

If we concede that basically man has not changed much, the explanation for present tensions must lie in modern environment and its impact on the inner self as exemplified by what we call nerves. From without to within, as it were.

In a way there is some anomaly here for the pressures of work, for example, have been diluted materially through hours shortened to a degree never dreamed of by our more placid although harder-working forebears.

Two factors in this humble scribe's view connive to bring about the nervous exhaustion that besets us. One of them is speed. In our civilization speed has been set up as a god to be worshipped avidly, and the result is a feverish atmosphere that surrounds all our doings. We rush hither and yon even when there is nothing at stake. We are too active. We belong to too many organizations. We are infected by a mental malaise that rejects the unhurried in preference for its opposite.

The connotations of fast cars and fast planes envelop our every habit.

* * *

The other, perhaps more important factor, is our greater awareness of everything. The mediums of mass communication bring all the earth's troubles to our doorstep, and the daily impact of so many unsettled events has an unsettling effect on each one of us. Unconsciously we take unto ourselves the fears and worries of society as a whole.

Whether we know it or not we get the jitters. We find it difficult to be calm, in an uncalm world. Nothing seems to be stable. In an age when for the western branch of civilization at least—the nuclear menace alone excepted—there is far more security than ever before, we feel insecure. And lack of security begets ulcers and their associated tensions.

The cure for all this? Stay home, simmer down, and meditate on the bridges we cross needlessly? Alas, it is easier to diagnose than prescribe a remedy. Perhaps it is simply that we should cultivate good temper and laugh more.

Gerald Waring

Reports from Ottawa

SPECULATION as to who will replace the late foreign minister raises a basic question: is the external affairs portfolio to be filled on the basis of ability? Or amiability?

Foreign Minister Sidney Smith was the most amiable of men, but his tragic death has not left the helm unmanned. Prime Minister Diefenbaker is now in name what in fact he has been all along—his own foreign minister. There's merely a greater work load on the skipper, who must stand watch until he ships a new mate.

On looking over the cabinet for possible foreign ministry material, I am struck by the mediocrity of this group measured against what I consider to be the requirements for a secretary of state for external affairs. To my mind, only Justice Minister Fulton and Finance Minister Fleming measure up. And elsewhere in the sea of Tory MPs, only Commons Speaker Roland Michener.

This is not to say that better than half of the ministers are not good in their jobs. It is not to say they might not do well in other jobs. But it is difficult to visualize Howard Green as a foreign minister. Or Mike Starr. Or George Hees. Or any of the others.

* * *

Admittedly, the main reason I am unable to point to more than two potential foreign ministers in the cabinet is that I am not looking for another Sidney Smith. I am looking for someone who shows signs that in time—our shortest commodity—he would develop the ability, the knowledge and the moral stature of a Mike Pearson or a Louis St. Laurent.

Perhaps this is not altogether fair. It disapproves the fact that the position of foreign minister has been down-graded in the Conservative administration. It implies something I believe: that the times we live in require the ablest man we can find to head the foreign ministry.

From this point of view, it is too bad Diefenbaker is prime minister. He is the ablest man the Tories have in the field of foreign affairs, and for this reason I was content two years ago that he should act as his own foreign minister. That was the summer of 1957, and even then others questioned his wisdom. Now, as a winter of international conflict drifts into an ominous spring, the wisdom of the PM trying to bear two back-breaking loads is open to much more pointed question than it was in the weeks following June 21, 1957.

Sidney Smith brought many fine human qualities to parliament and the foreign ministry — and also an abysmal lack of experience in and knowledge of foreign affairs. It was only during the last month—viz. his speech in the Commons on Feb. 26 and his testimony before the Commons' external affairs committee on March 9—that he demonstrated in impressive fashion that he was finally on top of his job. This made his untimely death March 17 all the more tragic.

In my opinion—and I think many will agree with me—we cannot afford to go through this process again at this time. The PM should appoint either of his two ablest lieutenants, Fulton or Fleming, or Speaker Michener, or he should go outside the Commons, perhaps into the ranks of the professional diplomats, where St. Laurent found Pearson. And in this context, I cannot help but wonder about George Drew.

Either way, Diefenbaker will be in the happier position of being able to delegate more responsibility, more real authority for decisions, than he ever allowed Smith.

A Poser for

Toronto The Good

PERHAPS because Nathan means gift, Mayor Phillips is willing to give himself the risky task of determining whether or not Toronto should be exposed to the semi-nude cast of Les Ballets Africains when this company comes to the Royal Alexandra Theatre.

New York objected, but Boston and Philadelphia accepted the performance as authentic African art. Now it is Toronto's turn, and the world waits breathlessly for the mayor's decision. Will the city, whose design for a new city hall aroused universal artistic appreciation, demand that the dancers cover themselves? Or will it applaud them and speak of sculptured beauty?

In assuming the role of censor, Mayor Phillips takes a formidable task. The city's reputation in artistic circles hangs in the balance. Whatever the decision there will be opposition, for such is the fate of the critic. If he says the dance is beautiful his opponents will call him a bohemian butterfly; if he says it is indecent he will be condemned as a prude. Against the fact that this is an African ballet by Africans who do not wear clothes in Africa is the fact that this is Toronto in winter where even the snow is ashamed when it is sullied.

When Africa comes to Toronto can Toronto transport itself to Africa? When the bare bodies writhe to the beat of the tom-tom will Mayor Phillips be leafing through the by-laws, or will he imagine himself stealthily stalking a zebra? The world will know after he has seen the show. Meanwhile mood music as the Mayor of All the People ponders the ordeal before him.

—TORONTO TELEGRAM.

The Packsack

Of GREGORY CLARK

WHEN on a motor trip, much of the fun, after a few days, lies in observing your fellow travellers. When you pull up for lunch at some small town you never heard of before, it becomes a game to try and pick out the fellow travellers from the natives who are sitting around you in the restaurant.

In Omaha, which are the Omahans and which the pilgrims from Vermont or Saskatchewan? You become fairly expert in the realization that you are as often wrong as right.

When two couples, travel-tanned and with that look of having just got out of a car, come in to sit at a table for four, you know you have a party of fellow travellers.

After speculating as to where they come from, the next question is: How are they paired off. Which woman is married to which man, in the four? Sometimes husband and wife sit opposite each other. Sometimes, they sit side to side on the corners. There is no rule to help you here.

It was my wife who explained to me how to pair off the parties of four correctly.

"When one of the men," she said, "makes a witty remark and one of the women laughs, she's the wife of the other fellow."

A little research proves this to be a reliable guide.

100 Years Old

Big Ben Is Radio Star

ON May 31, 1959, the Great Clock of the Palace of Westminster, and its world-famous hour bell, Big Ben, will be 100 years old. The clock, and its tower which keeps watch like a sentinel over the Houses of Parliament in London, draws part of its fame from its eminent situation; but it is radio that has given it its world-wide celebrity.

Big Ben, broadcast for the first time on New Year's Eve, 1923, is now Britain's oldest and hardest-worked radio "star." It is broadcast four times a day in the British Broadcasting Corporation's internal services, and it has an almost ritual significance as the herald of the most important news bulletin of the day, at 9 p.m.

It was broadcast for the first time to the Commonwealth on Christmas Day, 1932, when its chimes preceded King George V's message to his people—the first broadcast to the Commonwealth ever made by a reigning monarch.

* * *

Today, Big Ben can be heard by radio anywhere in the world. Its chimes, together with those of the quarter bells, are broadcast approximately 40 times a day in the BBC's General Overseas Service, and 32 times a day in the other external services. It is also heard four times a day in the Colonial Service, once in the Caribbean Service and twice in the Pacific Service.

As early as the 14th century there are records of a clock chiming over the Palace of Westminster, but this appears to have fallen into ruin in the 1700s. After the old Houses of Parliament were burned down in 1834, a clock tower was included in the plans for the new buildings. Eventually, after long discussion in the leisurely manner of 19th century parliaments, a Mr. E. J. Dent, a maker of astronomical clocks, was commissioned to make and install the clock. The firm of E. Dent & Co.—whose managing director, Mr. D. P. Buckney, is the great-great-grandson of the original clock-maker—is still today responsible for the maintenance and overhaul.

The making of the clock proceeded without incident; but not so the casting of the great hour bell. When it was delivered, it was feared that its weight—more than 16 tons—might be more than the old Westminster Bridge could stand. However, it was drawn safely across by 16 horses and hung for testing. This new bell was called "Big Ben" after the first commissioner of works, Sir Benjamin Hall. But a crack appeared in the giant bell and Big Ben II, weighing a little less than 14 tons, had to be cast.

Time soon proved the excellence of Dent's clock and of the bell. In the last report on its performance made by the Astronomer Royal, it was stated that on only 16 days in the year had it been more than one second fast or slow. And, fast or slow, it is by the chimes of Big Ben that the people of Britain set their own clocks and watches.

Stoppages of the clock have been rare, and nearly always due to some outside factor—such as snow freezing on the face and holding up the 14-feet-long minute hands. Once a large body of starlings perched on a minute hand at 8.45 p.m., with the result that the clock was five minutes slow at 9 p.m. The most serious stoppage resulted from the breaking of the original suspension spring in 1944, a delayed effect of the bombing of the Houses of Parliament in 1941.

Big Ben, having survived the attacks of two wars, thus begins its second century with a world-wide fame of which its founders could never have dreamt. To British people all over the world, its chimes sound the familiar note, not of government and legislation, but of everyday life in London, and of evenings by the fireside with the radio switched on for the 9 p.m. news bulletin.

U.K. Information Service.